

NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures) Texas Election Project

Jan. 22, 2013

Talking Points

Role as Chief Election Officer for the state of Texas

- While I'm just now getting my feet wet as Secretary of State, I'm excited about my role as Chief Elections Officer for the state of Texas.
- As we head towards the March primary and November general election, I am committed to ensuring that every vote counts, that voters have the information they need to cast a ballot, and that the elections are held in accordance with state law.

Photo ID

- Last November, we held our first statewide election under the photo ID law.
- More than a million Texans voted—a 66% increase over our last constitutional amendment election in 2011.
- Headlines across the state the day after the election were about election results and **not** about the voting process. I am proud that we have the finest election officials at all levels of our state who understand the importance of the integrity of our elections process.
 - Two main factors contributed to the successful implementation of the photo ID law:
 - Educating voters, AND
 - Making the photo ID requirement as simple to follow as possible.

As you may know, my office launched an ambitious statewide voter education campaign that included print, radio, TV, digital advertising and social media. I also personally traveled to every corner of the state to raise awareness of the photo ID requirement.

I have found that the best way to learn about a particular issue is to get in there and talk to the people who deal with it on a daily basis—and that's just what I did. In my travels, I learned about many commendable efforts by local election officials to meet the specific needs of their communities, such as visits to nursing homes and advertising on public transportation. I also valued the honest input I heard about what we could do to make your jobs easier.

On the simplicity front, our office and other state offices worked to anticipate problems and resolve them before they could be an issue for a potential voter. Additionally, we partnered with the Department of Public Safety to increase access and convenience for those who needed an EIC--Election Identification Certificate. In counties without DPS driver license offices, election officials were offered training and materials so they could issue EICs.

While we passed our first test of photo ID with flying colors, there is, as with any election, always room for improvement. Feedback from county elections officials across the state will enable us to fine-tune photo ID for the March primaries and beyond. In addition to making sure you have all the information you need for upcoming elections, I want to assure you that you will not be alone in dispensing all of this information. We're currently planning our next voter education campaign to ensure that citizens remain well-informed and have everything they need in order to fulfill their civic duty.

In closing today, I want to remind you that my office is always available to help and support you whenever you need us. We are all dedicated to the same thing: a smooth March primary where every Texas citizen who wants to have the opportunity to voice their choice for party candidates has the opportunity.

Before turning things over to my elections staff, I want to wish each and every one of you a safe and happy holiday season and wonderful New Year. Thank you for your dedication in coming here today to learn more about the process. And thank you for your countless hours of work to ensure Texas will continue making our elections fair, accessible and honorable. May God Bless You, and God Bless Texas.